

Jury Expected to Get George Case Today

Prosecutor Asks Conviction on 9 Counts; Defense Says Chief Witness Lied

By George Lardner Jr.
Washington Post Staff Writer

A special prosecutor accused former CIA spy chief Clair E. George yesterday of trying to blame everybody but himself for the "lies" and "half-truths" he told lawmakers and grand jurors about the Iran-contra affair over the past five years.

In a hard-hitting final argument at George's trial in U.S. District Court here, prosecutor Craig A. Gillen said the evidence "speaks loudly and clearly" for conviction on all nine counts against George.

Richard A. Hibey, the main defense lawyer, countered with a bitter attack on George's chief accuser, former CIA official Alan D. Fiers, who, Hibey said, concocted one false charge after another in a cynical move to avoid being branded a felon himself.

Hibey asserted that Fiers, as former chief of the CIA's Central American Task Force, was the one who knew what was going on with the Reagan administration's secret resupply network for the contra rebels in Nicaragua, lied to Congress about it and then made a deal with the prosecutors so that he could move on to a career "as a lobbyist on the very Hill he deceived."

But Gillen, who was entitled to the last word in rebuttal, said that George had shown a penchant throughout the trial for blaming others for his predicament, including Fiers; legislators whom George

called "hypocrites" and accused of setting him up; the late CIA director William J. Casey, who often bypassed George to deal directly with Fiers on Nicaragua; and even George's own secretary, who George said failed to deliver documents he had promised the Senate intelligence committee.

"Mr. George blamed everyone under the sun but himself," Gillen said. But "you don't have to go anywhere else on the planet to convict Clair George except to take the words out of his own mouth or documents that came out of his own safe."

U.S. District Judge Royce C. Lamberth said he would turn the case over to the jurors today after giving them final instructions.

George, 62, has been charged with perjury, obstruction and making false statements to congressional and grand jury panels investigating the Iran-contra affair over a five-year period. Each of the charges carries a maximum penalty of five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. Two of the counts could require prison time without parole of at least 10 months because they involve testimony George gave last year, after the effective date of federal sentencing guidelines.

Yesterday's war of words offered stark contrasts. Gillen was dogged, blunt and methodical, using enlargements of CIA cables, reciting chapter and verse of testimony

George gave and putting up a high-tech blackboard to list some of George's alleged lies on one side and contrary statements on the other. Gillen called the list "Clair George versus Clair George."

Hibey, on the other hand, was indignant, theatrical and folksy, occasionally drawing laughter from the jurors and relying on low-budget, hand-lettered charts. He emphasized inconsistencies between Fiers's testimony and that of other witnesses and accused Fiers of making assertions at trial that he had never made before.

For example, Hibey referred to an Oct. 9, 1986, CIA cable saying that a contra resupply operative known publicly as "Max Gomez" was actually Felix Rodriguez, a former CIA officer who had been recruited by then-White House aide Oliver L. North. The cable arrived the night before George, with Fiers accompanying him, told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that the CIA was "not aware" of the identities of the individuals involved in the covert resupply network.

Hibey contended George never looked at the cable, even though it was in his briefing book, and said Fiers had always said before trial that he could not recall reading it either. But at trial, Hibey said in mocking tones, Fiers testified that he must have read it because it was a "priority" cable and he always read such traffic before going home each evening.



BY WILLIAM HENNESSY FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

CIA ex-spy chief George, left, watches as prosecutor Gillen lists "lies" he allegedly told during the Iran-contra scandal.

"That's new, folks," Hibey told the jurors. "He [Fiers] never said that on any prior occasion, and even if he did [read it], he never said the cable was shown to Clair George."

Gillen maintained that George and Fiers "both lied" to Congress in October 1986 about the shutdown of a contra resupply plane because they did not want to jeopardize a \$100 million appropriation the CIA was on the verge of getting to resume aid to the contras after a two-year congressional ban.

The prosecutor added that

George "must have read" the Rodriguez cable because he at one point recited biographical facts from it at a congressional hearing while leaving out a segment saying that Rodriguez was working for "the private benefactors" comprising North's secret resupply network.

Hibey said that George was too busy with problems in the rest of the world to be conversant with details about the contras, especially in light of Casey's preference for dealing directly with Fiers. The lawyer denounced the trial as "an excursion into hypocrisy led by a

liar and a perjurer in the person of Alan Fiers [and] aided by politicians [such as Sen. John F. Kerry (D-Mass.) and former senator Thomas F. Eagleton (D-Mo.)] who refused to keep politics out of the courtroom" when they testified for the prosecution.

Gillen suggested George's biggest failing was that "he apparently forgot this is a democracy," adding: "He thought he owned the secrets. He lived in a world where he thought he was the master. There is no place for that in the United States of America."